

ASSOCIATED PRESS

29 May 1986

WHITE HOUSE JOINS IN WARNING ISSUED BY CIA

BY W. DALE NELSON

WASHINGTON (AP) — A White House spokesman said Thursday that reporters covering a spy trial in Baltimore should not disclose information beyond what is released by the government and that journalists in general should not disclose classified information.

Edward Djerejian cautioned reporters on the subject during a discussion of a statement issued by the CIA and National Security Agency in connection with the federal trial of former NSA worker Ronald Pelton.

Djerejian made the statement when asked to state the White House policy regarding a warning that journalists should not report information not specifically released during the proceedings.

Djerejian said the statement had been cleared by President Reagan's national security adviser, John Poindexter, and added, "We are in full agreement with the thrust of that statement."

"I think what the statement said was that speculation and reporting details beyond the information that has actually been released at trial should be considered very, very carefully," the spokesman said.

"The bottom line is reporting details beyond the information actually disclosed at the trial. I focus you on that," Djerejian said.

He said the statement was "not intended as a threat" and he was not suggesting that reporters would be prosecuted under a 1950 law, not previously applied to the press, against "disclosing any classified information concerning communications intelligence." CIA Director William Casey has raised the possibility of such prosecution in connection with some recent news stories.

Djerejian added that "beyond the details of specific cases" journalists "should not publicly disclose information that is classified or that will affect the national security interests of the United States."

"We have a responsibility in the government and this administration to assure that there is discipline and that there are not unauthorized disclosures ... and quite frankly that is the major thrust of what is being considered now," Djerejian said.

The White House is preparing for a meeting of officials of government agencies to discuss ways to crack down on leaks of national security information, but Djerejian said Wednesday no date has been set for the meeting.

He added that "the press and the electronic media have a responsibility, when they do have information, to look at that information and put it under the same standards of 'how will this affect the national security of the United States?' We're all Americans."

The CIA-NSA statement said the government's case against Pelton "will include release of certain classified information involving

intelligence activities of the United States ....''

The agencies said the ``decision to make use of this information in trial has been made by appropriate government authorities after careful consideration of the demands of trial and the potential harm that release of this selected data may cause the national security.''

Djerejian said the government had determined that ``in order to successfully prosecute, the information had to be available.''

The statement cautioned reporters ``against speculation and reporting details beyond the information actually released at trial.''